

# What Comes Naturally

I tend to be a nag by nature. I want things around the house in order. I am constantly giving orders to my children: "Brush your teeth, make your bed, feed the dog, do your homework." I find that my four children need constant direction. Yet, it is often difficult to stop the commands when my husband arrives home: "Take out the garbage, take the boys to football practice, put your shoes away, floss your teeth." And if he doesn't respond as quickly as I want him to, I repeat my command--adding please and thank you, of course.

Recently when my husband, John, arrived home after a more than difficult day, he drew my attention to the problem. He said he felt like one of the kids when I gave him a list of things to do. He told me that he had always heard the orders I gave him the first time, but he deliberately chose not to respond to nagging. He emphatically added he would like to come home to his wife, not his mother.

After licking my wounds, I had to recognize he was right. I just wished he hadn't used the "n" word. A wise man once said, "It is better to dwell on the rooftop than in a large house with a nagging wife."

So I decided to switch gears. Each day about one hour before John arrived home, I would begin dinner to eliminate the meal-time rush. I would finish any pressing household chores and worry about the rest later. I also determined to quit expecting my husband to do as much around the house. If he never took out the trash again, I would do it myself. I wanted him to feel good about coming home and glad to see me.

Something amazing happened. John still took out the trash. He usually remembered to put his shoes in the closet, but even when he didn't, I didn't let it bother me. I looked forward to his coming home in the afternoon. When he arrived, we sat in the kitchen and talked about the events of the day, not the "to do" list.

John began calling me more often during the day just to check on me and the kids, or to see if I needed him to pick up anything at the grocery store. I realize now that my letting go of the constant expectations has freed both John and me to enjoy one another more. I stopped nagging for the sake of my husband, but it is evident that I am reaping the benefits.

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